

WASHINGTON, DC –Congressman Steny H. Hoyer (D-MD) announced that the House of Representatives today passed the Fiscal Year 2007 Energy and Water Appropriations bill which included \$2 million for the Oyster Recovery Project, which is coordinating the revival of oysters in the Chesapeake Bay. This is in addition to the more than \$25 million in federal funding Hoyer has secured for the project to date.

“Since 1999, I have led the effort in the House of Representatives to secure more than \$25 million in federal funding for the Oyster Recovery Project and, since 2000, the Oyster Recovery Partnership has planted over 602 million spat at 37 locations in the Bay,” Hoyer said.

“However, I am extremely disappointed that the President effectively eliminated funding from his budget for the Oyster Recovery Project this year,” Hoyer added. “I have been witness to the strength and quality of the Oyster Recovery Partnership and the significant progress they have made to restore the oyster population in the Chesapeake Bay and its tributaries.”

“In the last few years, a consensus has emerged in the scientific community that in order to restore the overall health of the Chesapeake Bay, oyster restoration must be undertaken on a much larger scale,” Hoyer said. “I will continue to advocate on behalf of the Oyster Recovery Project and work to increase funding for this important partnership again this year,” Hoyer concluded.

The Oyster Recovery Project is working to create both managed harvest reserves and oyster sanctuaries which will provide in coming years a fresh supply of oysters for the watermen and the entire oyster industry infrastructure: shucking houses, businesses that serve harvesters and processors, and restaurants. The oyster reef structures that will be created thanks to this effort will provide critical habitat and feeding grounds for other essential species, and will also serve as natural filters screening out algae, sediments, and pollutants. Unfortunately, due to disease, pollution, and over fishing, oyster populations are only about two percent of their levels just a century ago.

In 1993 the Maryland Oyster Roundtable completed an action plan to restore the ecological and economic benefits of oysters in the Chesapeake Bay. The plan designated seven tributary rivers (Chester, Choptank, Magothy, Nanticoke, Patuxent, Severn, and Potomac) as oyster recovery areas, where efforts would be undertaken to replenish the oyster populations of the Bay. The goal is to increase the oyster population 10-fold from the 1994 levels by the year 2010.

Hoyer Announces \$2 Million to Help Restore Bay's Oyster Population Island

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The Oyster Recovery Project is undertaken jointly by the Oyster Recovery Partnership (a non-profit that coordinates the efforts of the government agencies), the Army Corps of Engineers, the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA), Maryland Department of Natural Resources and the University of Maryland's Center for Environmental Sciences.

The Senate must now pass the Fiscal Year 2007 Energy and Water Appropriations Act and the differences between the two bills must be reconciled in a House-Senate Conference Committee before the bill can become law.

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